



# UNITED FARM WORKERS

## ORGANIZING COMMITTEE AFL-CIO



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GEORGE MEANY  
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Director of Organization

Aug. 6, 1971

Dearest Ma

We're heading back to St. Louis after a 3-day Conference in Stillwater, Oklahoma, where Harriet and I were discussion leaders. I am writing in the car, so it may be a little bumpy, but a good opportunity to write.

We just gave a fiesta in St. Louis which was a fantastic success, beyond our wildest dreams. We had \$81.<sup>10</sup> in expenses, half for the hall rent (\$10) and custodian (\$27.50). There was \$900 in adds for our program and \$1100 on tickets, plus \$25 on buttons and \$135 on movie tickets (we're showing "Grapes of Wrath" and "Tobacco Road" in September). Almost everything was donated -- 132 pounds of union-harvested grapes; eight gallons of union wine (Christian Brothers altar wine donated by the Christian Brothers Seminary here -- 18% alcohol, stronger than regular wine -- we made sangria, a knock-out wine punch with wine, orange juice, Sprite, sugar, and fresh oranges, plums, watermelon and bananas all sliced up); a half keg and seven cases of beer; and two gallons of margaritas for after-dinner cocktails (donated by a Mexican Restaurant). We had 110 dozen donated tortillas, and made 60 dozen enchiladas, plus tortilla chips for a spicy bean dip (frijoles a la charra). We also had regular rice and beans. And 44 pounds of plums to go with the grapes. A really fantastic dinner, cooked by two Chicanas one of whom had been a professional cook for many

years.

We had programmed Dolores Huerta to come in, but she didn't make it, and the Women's Liberation guerrilla theater also failed to appear. But neither were really missed. After dinner we showed the film "Migrant, and N.B.C. White Paper" which is a really devastating look at the life of migrant workers in Florida. Then we gave our rap... not too heavy because the message really came across in the movie. Then we served the margaritas and the Mexican band started into action. We only had about 250 people (plus kids) but everyone had a great time and really enjoyed themselves, and it was a good chance to talk to people and organize them in a relaxed atmosphere.

We were invited to this Conference by Cricket Levinger, and our main purpose in going was to meet her and get contacts for Southern Illinois University in Carbondale and for Columbia, Missouri, both of which are in our area of responsibility. We met and organized a good committee for Columbia, which is 120 miles west of St. Louis, and got a good core of contacts for Carbondale.

Carbondale is also the center of the Southern Illinois peach and apple industries, and uses several thousand farm workers every summer. But the conference itself was a washout as far as its actual structure and purpose -- at least as far as we were concerned. These were mostly teachers or "organizers" connected with University extension services and O.E.O. projects, but the conference was overwhelmingly oriented towards "studying" and "researching" techniques of community organizing and community development. They were thus interested in comparing techniques of analyzing and appraising



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programs, and the jargon they used in describing people and projects and how to deal with people.... It's like another language. Plus they were so sexist, completely insulting and contemptuous to women. It was like a shoe salesman's or farmers convention, with lots of dirty jokes and sexist comments and sexist entertainment featuring belly dancers and a 4-foot tall Gospel singer. It was really performed as a freak show, a spectacle of extremely poor taste (and also of no redeeming quality of dancing or singing). And the whole thing was so patronizing, 90% white, 90% male, meeting in this fancy ballroom with sumptuous feasts and chandeliers and talking about how to help the poor through day-care centers and building community libraries and developing rural recreation. But we met some good people and saw some of Kansas and Oklahoma and it was good to get out of St. Louis for a while.

No chance of getting home in August, so give my love to Kappa and Bob and Randy, and of course to the Pomona Adams and Papa. Did you notice that Robin's old friend Fox Butterfield (I assume to the same one) is one of the N.Y. Times reporters that edited and did the articles on the Pentagon Papers? Buy Robin the paper-back edition.

If you can get a teachers discount, why don't you get me Mark Day's book FORTY ACRES, a new book about the union. And I still haven't seen Ruth Harmers book, which I would like to see.

I got a nice letter from David who is still in South Texas and doing well on the paper, hiring staff and making a profit.

Harriet is well. We assume we'll both stay here through the fall. The union is cranking up for a boycott against Italian Swiss Colony wine and Heublein products. I have no particular interest in it, for some reason. We've been working very hard on the few grape growers that never signed contracts, and are keeping steam up for resuming the lettuce boycott if negotiations break down. We've done a great job here preparing the ground for a major boycott, but haven't gotten down to any really heavy boycotting and picketing, which is the real test!

Much love to you all

Owla la Cause

P.S. I've tried hard to find your brief letter & checks. Thanks & Joy